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THE SECOND MAID'S TRAGEDY

There is in the British Museum a manuscript tragedy (Lansdowne ms. 807) of so much interest to scholars that for over two centuries it has provoked discussions and conjectures from experts, and others. Aside from the dramatic interest attaching to this curious piece—and this is by no means small—there is the interest in the manuscript itself (a model of beautiful Elizabethan handwriting, in perfect preservation, one of the few manuscripts which escaped Warburton's immortally notorious cook); there is the question of authorship, which has brought out more than one wild guess; and, finally, and not of least interest, is the question of the numerous alterations, corrections, deletions, and additions made in the original. This last point is of peculiar interest because it involves the question of the nature of the censorship of the drama at the close of the Elizabethan period; for the manuscript contains the corrections of Sir George Buc, then Master of the Revels, the first preserved instance we have of the kind in Buc's own hand.

The drama referred to has always gone by the title *The Second Maid's Tragedy*, for reasons which will appear. Langbaine evidently knew nothing of this manuscript, but Oldys wrote in his copy of the 1691 edition of Langbaine, opposite *The Maid's Tragedy*, the following note: "*The second Maid's Tragedy* licensed by Sr George Buc 31 Oct. 1611.—Tis a M. S. Folio in the possession of John Warburton Esq Somerset Herald.—Somebody has written upon it 'a Tragedy indeed!' It had no Authors name to it when Sr Geo. licensed it, but was afterwards ascribed to Geo. Chapman whose name by another hand is erased & Shakespeare's inserted." On the last page of the manuscript itself is the following, in Buc's handwriting: "This second Maydens tragedy (for it hath no

name inscribed) may with the reformations bee acted publicly. 31. octob. 1611. G. Buc." This is the first licensed play in England of which we have the original manuscript and license. This method of endorsing the play on the back was followed by Buc's successor Sir Henry Herbert, and, in general, has been continued down to the present day. Below this interesting document, in a late 17th or early 18th century hand, is written, "By Thomas Goffe [or Goughe]," which has been marked out and "George Chapman" substituted, which in turn has been crossed out and replaced by "By Will Shakspear," followed by "A Tragedy indeed." Since these ascriptions, this tragedy has been placed to the credit of Massinger (by Tieck), of Cyril Tournear (by Fleay), and of Middleton (by Swinburne).¹ It was not until 1824 that *The Second Maid's Tragedy* found its way into print. In that year it appeared in the *Old English Drama*, Vol. I, but with so many errors as to limit its value for textual study. In 1829 Tieck printed the piece in Vol. II of the *Shakespeare Vorschule*, and pointed out a number of blunders made in the English edition. In an able *Vorrede* Tieck makes out a strong case for Massinger as author of the tragedy, and, likewise, presents a plausible argument for naming the piece *The Tyrant* instead of by the title given it by Buc who, of course, had the then recent *Maid's Tragedy* in mind, the two dramas resembling in the one respect. On the first page of the manuscript, in the list of *dramatis personae*, the leading character is called "the now Usurping Tirant," and always enters as "Tyrant" throughout the tragedy which he dominates. Tieck calls the piece *Der Tyrann, oder die zweite Jungfrauen Tragödie*, and gives *Der Tyrann* for the running title. These two bits

¹ For discussions of the authorship of this tragedy, see *Englische Studien* II, 234; *Anglia* II, 47; and *Jahrbuch des deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft* XXVII, 194.

of evidence—Tieck's title and the ms. itself—are sufficient to free Fleay (*Eng. Dram.*, II, 331) from the charge, or credit, of furnishing the piece with a new title.

Again in Hazlitt's Dodsley (Vol. x) *The Second Maid's Tragedy* appeared, but still with numerous mistakes. In 1875, Chatto & Windus printed it with the "Doubtful Plays and Fragments" of Chapman, and indicated in footnotes the lines and words that had been marked in the manuscript for correction or deletion. This was a great advance over all former reprints of the tragedy, but manifestly too carelessly done, especially in respect of the marginal marks in the original, for the scholar's use. Finally I determined to edit the play myself, when lo! after spending a week last summer on the ms., the Malone Society appeared with such a faithful reprint of *The Second Maydens Tragedy* (Reprints 1909 [1910] with facsimiles and pp. xiii + 78), prepared by the General Editor, W. W. Greg, that I was thankful I had been forestalled in the task.²

The Second Maid's Tragedy is probably the work of Philip Massinger, and the alterations in the manuscript which have been made in a different hand, and which by some have been fondly ascribed to Shakespeare, are probably the work of a scribe. But it is not my purpose, in this brief review, to enter into the question of the authorship. The Malone Reprint will furnish the best argument for those interested in this phase of the subject. The tragedy turns on the lust of an usurping tyrant for the daughter of one of his subjects who is used as a pander. The tragic action is intensified by having the deposed king (a man of genuine nobility) in love with the heroine (who is always called "the Lady" in the piece). To save her virtue, the young lady commits suicide. At this point begins the peculiar originality of the author. The tyrant's lust does not end with the death of his victim. When he learns of her fate, he sends for a painter to bring back the bloom to the pale cheeks. When the tyrant is

called to inspect the work of the artist (who, by the way, is the deposed king disguised), he is overjoyed at the simulation of life, and rushes to kiss the lips of the dead woman. Poison has been mixed with the paint, and the usurper's passion meets its just reward. The whole thing is grotesque and revolting to the last degree, but, nevertheless, powerful. There is an under-tragedy of great merit, but it is overshadowed by the main theme.

Apart from the interest in this tragedy as a work of dramatic art, there is a vast opportunity for study and conjecture in connection with the alterations and marginal marks in the manuscript (these have all been indicated, with slight exceptions, with the greatest fidelity in the Malone Reprint). These are numerous and of a most perplexing nature. In the first place, there are five slips of paper with substitutions or alterations for as many passages, ranging from 5 to 15 lines in length and involving, in one instance, five speeches. These slips are of the same kind of paper as the ms. sheet and in a different handwriting. Some of these are pasted opposite passages marked in the margin, others have no such marks. The different kinds of markings are still more confusing. Sometimes a bold stroke in ink is drawn through the line from left to right; other passages are crossed out by a line slanting a little from the vertical; while still other passages are indicated by a line drawn like a square bracket in the margin. In some instances there are interlineations (*e. g.*, l. 1354). Again, there are a number of crosses in the margin, some like the letter "x," some like the "+" mark. Sometimes the cross is a blue pencil mark, sometimes it is in ink—and usually the two appear together as though some one had first gone over the play and called attention to certain passages by one sign, and another followed using his own mark to attract attention. At least three hands appear in the writing, besides the stage directions; that of the original copyist, that of the Master of the Revels, and a third. One of these was probably the author's, the third, Dr. Greg calls the scribe. There are also at least two shades of ink, both brown. Only a portion of these

²This article was written early in 1911, and "last summer," of course, refers to 1910.

distinguishing characteristics does the editor of the Malone Reprints call attention to. For the scholar, the fact that certain marginal marks have been made with a blue pencil, others with pen and ink, is of quite as much importance as the difference in handwritings.

The alterations and deletions seem to be of three origins, not always clearly differentiated. Without doubt, many of the changes were made by the author himself on his own initiative, for the avoidance of redundancy, or for other apparent reasons. Then there are certain passages marked which are clearly the work of the Master of the Revels, for has he not told us in his license on the back of the manuscript that he has indicated certain "reformatations" to be made in the tragedy? And, finally, for the sake of coherency or to further carry out the will of Buc as indicated by his strictures there are corrections apparently by the author or scribe. Aside from the deletions made by the author in the first instance, the passages marked for omission are, in general, of three kinds: those reflecting in too strong terms on tyrant kings, those reflecting on the nobility, and expletives considered as oaths. The question is, "How much of this work of excision was the work of Buc, how much that of the author?" The editor of the Reprint, relying almost entirely on the color of the ink, and the handwriting, finds only two alterations which can with complete certainty be ascribed to Buc. These are in l. 1354, where "great men" becomes "some men;" and l. 2403, where "I am poisoned" has been substituted for "yo^r kinges poisond." Two other changes have been ascribed to the Master "with reasonable certainty." The first occurs in the Tyrant's speech when he discovers the dead lady (ll. 1841-2). Addressing the body he says:

"hadst thou but ask't th' opynion of most ladies
thowd'st neuer come to this!"

In the first line, "many" has been substituted for "most." The other instance (ll. 1424-6) is of a similar character. Govianus the deposed king, in attributing the suicide of the lady to her love of honour and virtue, says,

"twas a straunge trick of her, few of yo^r ladies
in ordinary will belieue it, they abhor it
theile sooner kill them selues wth lust, than
for it;"

There are several other examples of substitutions and deletions made in deference to folk of rank. In l. 422 "brazen" has been substituted for "courtier" in "a Courtiers face;" "woman" for "courtier" in l. 713, and 9½ lines immediately following (ll. 716-24), reflecting on princes and kings, have been marked for omission. A long speech by Govianus (ll. 754-784), the best in the whole play, is heavily marked for deletion. One line is especially marked. viz., "as you perhapps will saie yo^r betters doe" (i. e., play the pander, the speech being addressed to the father of the lady). On these lines, with the others just mentioned, Mr. Greg risks only the comment "marked for omission," the inference being by the author or scribe. The length of the speech might, of course, account for the work having been done by the author; but then the line particularly marked seems significant. On the other hand, if it had been the work of the censor, it would seem that he would have stricken out the remainder of the speech which ends,

"But miserable notes that Conscience singes
that cannot truly praye, for flatteringe Kinges."

In l. 1545 a concession has been made to knight-hood, and the editor admits, with a question mark however, that it may have been done by Buc. The line runs:

"thers many a good knightes daughter is in
seruice,"

in which "mens" has been interlined for "knightes."

Although a half dozen expletives (to be considered in a moment) and two of the foregoing passages have been ascribed to Buc by the editor of the Malone Reprint, it is with a degree of timorousness that he does so. The difficulty which constantly confronted him in reaching definite conclusions respecting the origin of the numerous marks may be best judged from the following deleted couplet which closes a speech of the deposed king (ll. 2209-2210):

"Tyrant ile rvnne thee on a daungerous shelf,
thoe I be forc't to fle this land myself."

These lines are marked out in ink. Commenting, Greg says, "Internal evidence would strongly recommend [the deletion to be the work of Buc,] but the ink appears to be the same as that of the substitution in the previous line, which is clearly not by Buc." It is this stumbling-block of the different shades of ink which appear in the ms. that makes the editor over-cautious in assigning the various marked passages. On the other hand, he takes no notice of the blue pencil crosses in the margin—an evidence quite as significant as that arising out of the shades of ink. I may add here that no one, so far as I am aware, has ever before called attention to these blue pencil crosses. It is only fair, however, to point out that the editor sees the indirect work of the censor even when tangible proof is wanting. Personally, I think there is little doubt that Buc was responsible for most of the passages marked for omission which were too pointed against kingship and the nobility. Some of the best speeches have been excised, as for example, that of Govianus to the Tyrant (ll. 2358-69), beginning,

"O thow sacrilidgious villaine
thow thief of rest, robber of monuments," etc.

and the one at the end of the play (ll. 2429-31) where the Tyrant is called "Monster in synne."

When we come to the expletives ("life," "heart," etc.), the editor, still relying on the shades of ink, is scrupulously careful in his ascriptions. "Life" has been deleted ten times, five of which Greg places to the credit of the Master of the Revels; "heart" has been marked five times, three are given to Buc; "Bi'th masse" has been cut out once, not ascribed by the editor. Respecting these deletions of oaths he says: "On the whole it seems likely that most are due to the author, but in some cases it is legitimate to assume the influence, if not the actual work, of the censor. Particularly is this the case with the deletion of the expletives *heart* and *life*. In only a few instances does the ink appear dark enough to allow us to suppose the activity of Buc himself, but it is evident

that somebody took the hint and made a pretty thorough expurgation of the text." Notwithstanding this assertion, the manuscript and the Malone Reprint show that "life" was passed over three times (ll. 384, 630, 1383), "uds life" once (l. 2110), "mass" twice (ll. 246, 392), and "faith" or "yfaith" nine times (ll. 616, 1463, 1580, 1618, 1623, 1629, 1635, 1770, 2022). Thus, sixteen expletives were allowed, and sixteen were excised, so that, after all, the expurgation could not have been so very thorough. It may appear strange that any of these "oaths" should have been found objectionable; but it should be remembered that *The Second Maid's Tragedy* was written in the year of the King James Bible, and, besides, the most blasphemous of the Stuarts was likewise the most pious.

The editor's conclusions regarding the alterations and excisions have already been indicated. "For the majority of the corrections," he says in his preface to *The Second Maydens Tragedy*, "and probably the bulk of the deletions and omissions the author seems responsible, but there are obvious reasons for suspecting that in some cases at least he was acting under the inspiration of the censor. Glancing through the alterations and deletions in the text it is easy to imagine the hand of the official censor in more instances than a critical examination warrants." This is a perfectly safe position to maintain, but, on the other hand, it is none too sure a test to rely on the differences in the shades of ink employed in the ms., for these are often so slight as to defy detection. Furthermore, it does not follow, however likely, that all the corrections and deletions by the same hand were made at the same time and out of the same ink-well. And as for tracing the handwritings of the different persons responsible for the ms. as we have it, that test would break down to a considerable extent when it comes to an examination of the marked passages, for these are indicated by lines alone. I have already mentioned that the blue pencil marks are passed over by the editor without notice. It would seem a far safer basis for conjecture to assume that all the pencil marks are by the same hand than to depend on detect-

ing two slightly different shades of sepiä. I do not wish to imply that the editor holds fast to the tests of handwriting and shades—he is anything but dogmatic. But these are practically the only tests applied and they do not leave us satisfied. The result is largely negative, or at best, with few exceptions, mere probability, whereas it would seem that there is a psychology back of all these marks and deletions to be found in the character of James I, and in the custom and practices of the Master of the Revels during his reign. We do know that James was strictly averse to profanity on the stage, and that he was particularly jealous of all political allusions that in any way reflected on kingship, which was not next to divinity, it was itself divine. In 1605 *Gowry* had been forbidden for political reasons, and the authors of *Eastward Ho!* got themselves into prison for certain flings at James and his carpet-bag Scotch knights. Following upon these incidents the authority of the Master of the Revels was greatly increased, and as the censor of the stage has always been the instrument of the throne, we may feel fairly confident that more of the deletions in *The Second Maid's Tragedy* were the direct work of Buc than the editor has ascribed to him. Except where the handwriting definitely proves the corrector to be other than the censor (as in the case of the excised redundant passages, the alterations made to preserve the coherence, and a few others) I am inclined to think that, in the first instance, Buc marked or deleted certain expletives and the more violent attacks on the Tyrant, as his master King James would have desired him to do. The ms. then went back to the author who possibly made additional alterations in keeping with those of the censor, and others to reestablish connections. If proofs for these conjectures are demanded, we should have to take refuge in the editor's stronghold.

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FAUSTMISZELLEN

I. *Angeraucht Papier* und einiges mehr, "Urfaust" 1. Scene.

Ich habe mir die oft besprochenen Worte immer in folgender Weise erklärt. In den Büchern bis oben an die Decke hin—also nicht nur in den unten, am nächsten zurhand stehenden und am meisten gebrauchten—stecken überall die Leseseichen, regelrechte Zackenreihen bildend: das und nichts anderes, nennt man *besteckt*. Es deutet darauf hin, welch ungeheure Büchermassen Faust schon bewältigt hat. Und dass diese Papierstreifen angeräuchert sind, zeigt, wie viele Jahre die Studien schon absorbiert haben: seine besten Jahre, wo er die Schönheiten der Natur und das Leben mit seinem heissen Pulsschlag hätte genießen sollen, statt über den Schmökern zu brüten. Die Papierstreifen sind natürlich nur soweit angeräuchert als sie aus den Büchern heraussehen: Jeder Besucher alter Bibliotheken kennt Beispiele, wo diese Zettel, soweit sie im Buche stecken, ihre ursprüngliche Reinheit und Farbe unverändert behalten haben und darüber hinaus fast schwarz geworden sind.—Grammatisch steht der Deutung, die ich mir schon vor Jahren zurechtgelegt habe, und an der ich noch immer festhalte, nichts im Wege—auch wenn man sie, was nirgends so wenig Berechtigung als im Urfaust hat, mit strengen Augen ansieht. Prüfen wir sie im Zusammenhange des ganzen Abschnitts:

- 45 Weh! steck ich in dem Kerker noch
Verfluchtes dumpfes Mauerloch
Wo selbst das liebe Himmels Licht
Trüb durch gemahlte Scheiben bricht.
Beschränkt von all dem Bücherhauff
- 50 Den Würmer nagen, Staub bedekt
Und bis ans hohe Gewölb hinauf
Mit angeraucht Papier besteckt
Mit Gläsern Büchsen rings bestellt
Mit Instrumenten vollgepropft,
- 55 Uhrväter Hausrath drein gestopft,
Das ist deine Welt, das heisst eine Welt!

Die Interpunktion ist so, wie wir sie aus dieser Periode der Literatur und Goethes kennen. Von der in den Drucken angebrachten haben wir grundsätzlich abzusehen: Goethe wusste ja selbst nicht mehr genau, wie er seine Verse konstruieren sollte.—Worauf bezieht sich also *Beschränkt* usw.?